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# Brazilian and Spanish Literature and Cinema: A Comparative Perspective

## Literatura y cine en Brasil y España: análisis comparativo

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## Abstract

This article sets out to make a comparative analysis of the emergence of cinema in Brazil and Spain between 1896 and 1920. It takes into account the socio-cultural and economic factors of these two countries as well as the relationship between this new manifestation of art and literature, and by so doing points towards possible contributions of literary narratives to the development, or underdevelopment, of national cinematographic productions. To this end, a bibliographical survey of the history of the cinema in Brazil and Spain was made. This takes into account information for which there are no formal records but which can be gleaned from informal records. The results point to literature having made an important contribution, during the first 25 years of the cinema, especially in Spain, where the literary system was better structured and there was an outlook that prioritized national productions. In Brazil, this contribution was far from significant since cinema was considered an activity engaged on by foreigners and did not form part of the national vision for art.

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Key words: Brazil; Spain; Cinema; Literature.

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## Introduction

Cultural and comparative studies have made it possible for there to be a growing number of research studies which set out to highlight the importance of studying an object not only based on its own characteristics, but also on the context in which this object is inserted. The relationship between Literature and Cinema has, in recent times, been arousing the interest of researchers who see art as having varied manifestations which seeks to represent human beings and their relationships with the other.

The act of comparing has always been present in human actions. Nowadays, this act seems to be more visible, either because of the need to establish borders, or because postmodern humanity has an increasingly multifaceted and “liquid” identity. In its constant search to understand humans, at different moments in history, Literature was alert, and sought to describe people based on their relationships with the other and with the environment. This symbiotic relationship is well portrayed in many cinematographic works, which sometimes serve as a parameter for reconstituting historical facts.

The ease that literature and film have to dialogue with other art forms and areas has provided a multiplicity of re-readings and rewritings of today's society. Geography, History, Philosophy, Sociology, Anthropology, Religion, and a great many other forms of knowledge are always present, explicitly or implicitly, in literary, cinematographic and artistic works as a whole, as a primary or secondary element, thus showing that man does not exist for himself alone and that man's actions will always depend on external factors. This intertwining of elements sees to it that artistic representations that, be it in a simpler or more complex way, better shape man as a social being.

This study sets out to make a comparative analysis of the emergence of cinema in Brazil and Spain between 1896 and 1920, while taking into account the socio-cultural and economic factors of these two countries, as well as the relationship of this new manifestation of the arts with literature. It does so by pointing to possible contributions of literary narratives to the development, or underdevelopment, of national cinematographic productions. The intention is therefore to start a debate on this theme,

and to show this relationship from two historical, cultural and social contexts that are very different from each other, but can bring to the fore that there are important similarities with regard to nationalizing, renewing and transforming manifestations of the arts.

## Revisiting history: Brazilian and Spanish Cinema

Contrary to what one might think, the initial development of cinematographic activities in Brazil and Spain occurred in a very similar way. In both countries, the first projection took place in 1896, shortly after the Lumière brothers presented their new invention: the cinematograph. However, the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was marked by strong nationalist ideas that later became flagships for movements such as *Saudosismo* and *Integralismo*, in Brazil and Portugal, and *Regeneracionismo*, in Spain. The latter, although it emerged in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, only demonstrates a more artistic-literary character at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. According to Nuria Triana-Tiribio (2003, p.1):

The cinematographe was one of those products of industrialization and modernity that served to remind many of Spain's differences from modern Europe. For some, this difference was welcomed and worth preserving and for others it lay at the root of all nation's problems.

In other words, the emergence of cinema in Spain coincides exactly with the discussions of national identity that blossomed in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. At the same time, in Brazil, the atmosphere became one of discussing what national identity entailed, which in artistic terms, culminated in the Week of Modern Art of 1922. Commenting on the general framework of Brazilian society of the period in question, Alfredo Bosi (2006) comments:

The general background of Brazilian society at the end of the century is that of its being transformed thanks to processes of urbanization and the arrival of European immigrants in ever-increasing waves to the center-south ... Out of this background, conflicting ideologies loom up: agrarian traditionalism adjusts poorly to the restless mind of the urban centers (Bosi, 2006, p.304).<sup>1</sup>

The arrival of European immigrants to Brazil favored the development of cinema even at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, like Spain, as we can see from the Table 1. It should be noted that there is a divergence of sources regarding the number of works produced in this period, and there may be works dating from this period but which are not mentioned in the Table 1.

1. O quadro geral da sociedade brasileira dos fins do século vai-se transformando graças a processos de urbanização e a vinda de imigrantes europeus em levas cada vez maiores para o centro-sul... Do quadro, emergem ideologias em conflito: o tradicionalismo agrário ajusta-se mal à mente inquieta dos centros urbanos (Bosi, 2006, p.304).

Table 1

Year	SPAIN	BRAZIL
1896	First national exhibition, Spanish Vistas, by Alexander Promio	First foreign cinematographic exhibition
1897	<i>El Entierro del General Sánchez Bregua</i> , by Eduardo Moreno; <i>Riña en un café</i> , by Fructuós Gelabert	The first cinema hall with regular screenings was opened by the Italian immigrant Paschoal Segreto; Production of the films <i>Arrival of the train in Petropolis</i> , <i>Children's Ball in the College</i> , in <i>Andaraí</i> , and <i>Maxixe</i> , by Vittorio Di Maio.
1898	Many exhibition halls open in Barcelona	Filming of Guanabara Bay, by Affonso Segreto*
1900	Cinematographic companies multiply in Barcelona and other cities	The Segreto brothers set up a studio so as to produce footage of events such as military parades, fires, demonstrations, etc.
1905	<i>Los guapos de la Vaquería del Parque</i> , by Fructuós Gelabert; <i>Se da de comer</i> , by Chamón	_____
1906	<i>Cerveza grátis</i> , by Fructuós Gelabert	<i>Os estranguladores</i> , by Antônio Leal
1907	<i>Terra Baixa</i> , by Guimerà	
1908	<i>Los competidores</i> , <i>Guardia burlado</i> , <i>El moscardón</i> , <i>Por un ratón</i> y <i>Los primeros calzoncillos de Toni</i> , by Fructuós Gelabert; <i>Maria Rosa</i> by Guimerà; <i>La Dolores</i> , by Fructuós Gelabert	<i>Nhõ Anastácio chegou de viagem</i> , by Julio Ferraz; <i>O comprador de ratos</i> , by Antônio Serra; <i>Telegrama número nove</i> , by Eduardo Leite; <i>O triunfo de Nero</i> , by Júlio Ferraz; <i>Viúva alegre</i> , by Giuseppe Labanca;
1909	<i>Baño imprevisto</i> ; <i>Amor que mata</i> by Josep Vives; <i>Guzmán el Bueno</i>	<i>O crime da mala</i> , by Francisco Serrador, and <i>Noivado de sangue</i> , by Antônio Leal.

\* For some researchers, this is said to have been the first film produced in Brazil, but this statement is not validated by some studies that point to the films of Vittorio Di Maio, 1897, as the first national productions (Simis, 1996).

Even though its first showings were relatively early, if compared to the countries that would become the great powers of the cinema in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, cinematography was not part of the national vision for the arts in these countries, and the lack of attention and incentive, both financial and artistic, led to the early productions being lost or forgotten for lack of records, as Tatjana Pavlovic (2008, p. 18) points out: *Spanish silent film history is a tale of lost patrimony and its ghostly remnants. The number of lost and destroyed films is astonishing; only 10 percent of pre-Civil War (1936) films remain in existence*<sup>4</sup>. Pavlovic further adds that cinema was considered too ephemeral to receive serious attention from most intellectuals and politicians. This reality was no different in Brazil where cinema-related activities were considered foreign and depended on European and US contributions.

An important point of convergence between the two countries regarding the historical moment of their first productions was the fact that they are predominantly rural countries, as pointed out by the critics José Antônio Bello Cuevas (2014) and Nelson do Valle Silva (1999):

Cuando el cine se presenta en España, en mayo de 1896, era un país subdesarrollado pese a ser aún “Imperio”. El 91% de la población vivía en el ámbito rural; más de la mitad era analfabeta total o como mínimo analfabeta potencial, solo un 20% sabía leer y escribir; se estaban desarrollando las guerras de la independencia de las tres últimas colonias de ultramar: Cuba, Puerto Rico y Filipinas, finalizadas en 1898 y posteriormente las sucesivas guerras en Marruecos, por un periodo de más de veinte años. (Bello Cuevas, 2014, p.3) <sup>2</sup>

O Brasil do início do século XX era predominantemente rural; a migração rural-urbana era modesta; e a industrialização, ainda incipiente, dava os seus primeiros passos. Os poucos empregos industriais, daquela época, relacionavam-se aos subsetores tradicionais, como o têxtil, o agroindustrial, etc (Valle Silva, 1999, p.189).<sup>3</sup>

The fact that they were countries whose main economic activities came from the rural area did little to contribute to forming a minimum infrastructure that might foster the development of cinema in both countries. In Brazil, for example, there was a deficiency in electricity supply that made it impossible to open exhibition houses in all regions of the country, which were therefore concentrated initially in Rio de Janeiro (population in 1900 of approx. 810,000) and São Paulo (population in 1900 of approx. 240,000.)

In this context, Debs (2007) points out that “the technical, economic and cultural dependence faced by the Brazilian cinema led to the difficulty of finding the elements of an autonomous and original expression.” Thus, there was no national policy that might have encouraged studies or records of this new medium of cultural expression. However, the innovative and transformational aspects of cinema in the milieu of the cultural arts were visible. Artists such as Artur Azevedo, Chiquinha Gonzaga and Olavo Bilac, among others, recognized that the cinema had the potential to disseminate information, which would later become an important vehicle for reproducing and propagating already established artistic works.

The partnership between cinema and other arts began at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and Chiquinha Gonzaga’s musical *Omniografo* (1901) can be considered the work that initiated this long –albeit limited - trajectory. According to Anita Simis (1996), cinematographic language “influenced the literary style of several authors, such as Oswaldode Andrade, who constructed, having been inspired by the montage of the films, fusions and cuts, the use of reading between the lines, his first novel, *Os Condenados*, (The Damned)” (p.21). Undoubtedly, the cinema served as inspiration for important literary styles that arose out of the modernist atmosphere. It would be no exaggeration to say, for example, that writing that uses the flow of consciousness technique which

2. When the cinema appears in Spain, in May of 1896, it was an underdeveloped country in spite of being still an “Empire”. 91% of the population lived in rural areas; more than half were totally illiterate or with a minimum of literacy, only 20% could read and write; the wars of independence of the last three overseas colonies were still running their course: Cuba, Puerto Rico and the Philippines, ended in 1898 and subsequent successive wars in Morocco, for a period of more than twenty years. [Our translation]

3. Brazil of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century was predominantly rural; rural-urban migration was modest; and industrialization, still in its infancy, was taking its first steps. The few industrial jobs of that time were related to traditional subsectors, such as textiles, agroindustry, etc. (Valle Silva, 1999, p.189). Paper presented at the XXV Annual Meeting of ANPOCS, Caxambu, from October 16 to 20, 2001.

was popularized by James Joyce in *Ulysses*, by Virginia Woolf in *Mrs. Dalloway* and by William Faulkner in *The Sound and the Fury*, to cite a few examples, accurately reflects the effects of a camera while trying to capture a character's thoughts, consciousness and imagination.

In Spain, this partnership was not much more intense and visible. Right at the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, novelists and playwrights realized that cinema could be an important vehicle for disseminating their works, and they were beginning to think of adaptation as a way to maintain their audience. Furthermore, as in Brazil, the characteristics of this new form of expression were recognized as close to those eagerly sought by writers who saw the need for innovation in the techniques of literary writing. Authors like Antonio Paso, Eduardo Marquina, Pedro Muñoz Seca, Wenceslao Fernández Flórez, Jacinto Benavente, Jardiel Poncela, Pío Baroja and Valle Inclán, among others, were important names in the artistic milieu who showed the possibility of a dialogue between existing artistic forms and what cinema could provide. This recognition is well expressed by the playwright, poet and novelist Valle Inclán in an interview for *Luz* magazine<sup>7</sup>:

..... habrá que hacer un teatro sin relatos; ni únicosdecorados; que siga el ejemplo del cine actual, que, sin palabras y sintono, únicamente valiéndose del dinamismo y la variedad de imágenes, de escenarios, ha sabido triunfar en todo el mundo.<sup>4</sup>..(Valle Inclán, 1933).

Although this feeling was not shared among all those of the artistic class, those who saw in the cinema an important instrument of dialogue between the arts, managed to leave a true legacy, in terms of production, based on the process of adaptation.

By making a comparative analysis of the interface between literature and cinema in the two countries in question, it can be affirmed that the cinema received important contributions from literary narratives, especially from the 1920s. However, this relationship did not have the same intensity nor did it generate approximate numbers of productions, as it did in the first decade of cinematography, as demonstrated above. In Spain, the number of adaptations of literary works made in the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century is surprising if compared to other European countries. Among such adaptations are many classics of Spanish literature, as can be seen from the list below, which does not claim to cover all the adaptations of that age, but only to demonstrate the width of the partnership between literature and cinema in the first decades of film production in Spain.

From the archives of the Miguel de Cervantes Virtual Library (2017), we highlight: *Tierra baja* (1907); *La dolores* (1908); *Don Juan Tenorio* (1908); *María Rosa* (1908); *Aventuras de Pepín* (1909); *Guzmán el Bueno* (1909); *Locura de amor* (1909); *Carceleras* (1910); *La fiesta de San Antón* (1910); *La manta del caballo* (1910); *El pobre Valbuena* (1910); *El puñao de rosas* (1910); *Don Juan Tenorio* (1910); *La fatalidad* (1910); *Los guapos* (1910); *Baixant de la Font del Gat* (1910); *Mar y cielo* (1910); *La tempranica* (1910); *Don Juan de Serrallonga* (1911); *Los amantes de Teruel* (1912); *Mala raza* (1912); *Lucha por la herencia* (1913); *El tonto de la huerta* (1913); *Trampa y cartón* (1913); *Amor andaluz* (1914); *La chavala* (1914); *La fiesta del Trigo* (1914); *El alcalde de Zalamea* (1914); *El calvario de un héroe* (1914); *La gitana* (1914); *La malquerida* (1914); *Misterio de dolor* (1914); *El modelo de virtudes* (1914); *La*

4. ... there will have to be a theater without stories; not only decorated; to follow the example of contemporary cinema, which, without words and tone, only taking advantage of the dynamism and variety of images, scenery, managed to succeed everywhere. [Our translation]

*tierra de los naranjos* (1914); *Barcelona y sus misterios* (1915); *El león de la sierra* (1915); *El pollo Tejada* (1915); *Los apuros de un paleta* (1916); *La razón social* Castro y Ferrant (1916); *La reina joven* (1916); *Sangre y arena* (1916); *El testamento de Diego Rocafort* (1916); *La España trágica* (1917); *Juan José* (1917); *De cuarenta para arriba* (1917); *La dicha ajena* (1918); *Los intereses creados* (1918); *El manuscrito de una madre* (1918); *La mesonera del Tormes* (1919); *El otro* (1919). This number of adaptations reinforces what Nuria Triana Toribio (2003) affirms about the role of adaptations as strategies for competing with foreign productions:

... film adaptation of autochthonous playwrights and already popular zarzuelas and sainetested to compete with imported productions (first from European countries and later from Hollywood) that were superior in technical accomplishment and quality (Triana-Toribio, 2003, p. 10).

While a very large number of adaptations were made in Spain, Brazil underwent what was called the golden age of Brazilian cinema. According to the researcher Paulo Emilio Gomes (1980), this period of ascension enabled many genres to emerge, amongst which were matuto (red-neck), crime, melodrama, melodramas, costume dramas, patriotic, religious, carnival, comedies, musicals and serial-films. Turning more to popular tastes, the Brazilian filmmakers saw in these new genres a more genuine form of national representation, and thus left adaptations on a more secondary plane.

Between 1909 and 1910, for example, more than 200 films were produced in Brazil, and reached a total of approximately 1000 national films in 1912. According to Simis (1996, p.77): "a large number of these films were shorts, various were documentaries (768), views of sights, and a quarter were of fiction (240)". As this significant number of productions and exhibition halls was spread out in the great Brazilian metropolises, foreign films had little space and did not represent threats to local productions until 1912, when the golden period ends and the new cycle in the history of Brazilian cinema begins.

Not very promising in terms of cultural independence, the new cycle inaugurated foreign supremacy over the national output. According to Gomes (1980):

Essa idade do ouro não poderia durar, pois sua eclosão coincide com a transformação do cinema artesanal em importante indústria nos países mais adiantados. Em troca do café que exportava, o Brasil importava até palito e era normal que importasse também o entretenimento fabricado nos grandes centros da Europa e da América do Norte. Em alguns meses o cinema nacional eclipsou-se e o mercado cinematográfico brasileiro, em constante desenvolvimento, ficou inteiramente à disposição do filme estrangeiro. Inteiramente à margem e quase ignorado pelo público, subsistiu contudo um debilíssimo cinema brasileiro...De 1912 em diante, durante dez anos, foram produzidos anualmente apenas cerca de seis filmes de enredo, nem todos com tempo de projeção superior a uma hora (Gomes, 1980, p. 29-30).<sup>5</sup>

5. This age of gold could not last, because its outbreak coincides with the transformation of artisanal cinema into an important industry in the most advanced countries. In exchange for the coffee that it exported, Brazil even imported toothpicks and it was normal that it also imported the entertainment manufactured in the great centers of Europe and North America. In a few months the national cinema was eclipsed and the Brazilian film market, in constant development, was entirely at the disposal of the foreign film. Entirely on the side-lines and almost ignored by the public, an extremely debilitated Brazilian cinema nevertheless eked out its subsistence... From 1912 on, In the past, for ten years, only about six plot films with a plot were produced annually, not all of which had a projection time exceeding one hour (Gomes, 1980, pp. 29-30).

Given that the scenario was so unfavorable to national production, the adaptations of literary works to the cinema emerged as a timid form of subsistence in the midst of foreign domination. Not very significant in quantity, but quite expressive in quality are the adaptations of some of the greatest classics of Brazilian literature: *Innocence* (1915); *The Little Widow* (1915); *The Guarani* (1916); *Iracema* (1918); *Ubirajara* (1919); and *The Guarani* (1926), to cite some examples, a reality quite different from the situation in Spain reported on above.

Several factors contributed to the bankruptcy of national production, including the outbreak of the First World War and all the economic and import problems arising from the trade barriers imposed by it. However, while on the one hand the war was ruinous for national film production in many countries, on the other hand, it behaved as a true ally of the Hollywood industry, thus favoring its total superiority in technical, economic, and industrial terms, and quickly became popular in countries that were allies of the USA in Europe and in most South American countries.

It should be noted, however, that Brazil has always been in the sphere of interests of the foreign film industry, probably because it is the largest country in Latin America and has great potential for consuming its products. In this respect the filmmaker Alex Viany (1987) makes an important observation:

From the early days the Brazilian market became of great importance for the producing centers of the time. First came the experimental films of Edison, Lumière, and others. Soon after, the more elaborate scientific work of Méliès, Zecca, Edwin Porter, etc. Then the Italian epics of Ambrose, Pastrone and Guazzoni. Immediately after, the Scandinavian dramas of Asta Nielsen and Valdemar Psilander. In 1915, in a contest of popularity carried out in Brazil, the first four places were occupied by the Italian, Francesca Bertini, by the Danes, Nielsen and Psilander, and the North American, Maurice Costello. From then on, however, guaranteed by the banks, which had gradually taken control of the studios, American films began to enter with greater force in our market, gradually eliminating, by using massive production and advertising, their foreign competitors (Viany, 1987, p. 37).

In this scenario, it is almost unbelievable that there was such a significant period in national productions as the well-known "golden age of Brazilian cinema", which shows us a promising attempt - even for a short time - to aggregate the new narrative tendencies brought by the cinema to the then existing artistic expressions in Brazil. With the decline of the golden age, cinematographic activities were restricted to the production of newsreels, documentaries and a few adaptations or films which had a plot. Referring to this period, Gomes (1980) comments that after 1912, the continuity of Brazilian cinema was initially restricted to the activities of some cameramen or professionals such as Antônio Leal, Paulino and Alberto Botelho who dedicated themselves to documentaries and the cinematographic telling of news. Gomes further emphasizes that:

A média anual entre 1912 e 1922 foi de seis filmes. Da quase paralisação dos anos 1912-14, chegamos a uma produção relativamente abundante de dezesseis filmes em 1917, para haver uma brusca queda no ano seguinte, com uma medíocre reação até 1922 (Gomes, 1980, p. 52).<sup>6</sup>

6. The annual average between 1912 and 1922 was six films. From the near-paralysis of the years from 1912-14, we reached a relatively abundant production of sixteen films in 1917, only for there to be a sharp fall the following year, with a mediocre reaction until 1922 "(Gomes, 1980, p.52).



This collapse in national production occurred not only in Brazil, but in virtually every country in Europe where cinema had established itself as an important means of entertainment and cultural production. Anita Simis (1996) points out in a brief comparative analysis of the impact of World War I on film productions in Brazil and Europe, and the close connection of this event with the advances in the 1920s of Hollywood productions worldwide.

A Primeira Guerra Mundial desorganizou a estrutura industrial européia, produzindo um vazio que foi ocupado pelos filmes americanos. Assim, em 1925, estes filmes ocupavam 70% do mercado francês, 95% do inglês, e 68% do italiano [...] Em 1921, do total de 1295 filmes censurados no Rio de Janeiro, 923 eram de procedência americana, posicionando o Brasil no quarto lugar entre os países importadores de filmes impressos dos EUA. Em 1925, esta tendência acentuou” (Simis, 1996, p. 74).<sup>7</sup>

In this overview, Simis makes no reference to Spain, perhaps because Spanish production has persevered with the ideas of nationalizing art as a whole. Although the superiority of foreign productions was an indisputable fact, the feeling of nationality took precedence over the total adherence to foreign films. According to Triana-Toribio (2016), the strategy of ‘Spanishizing’ cinematographic production guaranteed national marketing characteristics, while at the same time making production possible at a low price. Elements of national culture such as bullfighting, flamenco, festivities of the Catholic tradition allied to popular characters of literary narratives helped to make Spanish cinema a family entertainment, thus guaranteeing an audience that was loyal to national productions.

It is noted that the combination of literature and film was fundamental for Spanish cinema to maintain its field of production and audience even in the face of a tremendous avalanche of foreign productions. According to the writer Francisco Durán Tena (2007):

Desde su aparición, el cine y la literatura han estado estrechamente unidos. Cualquier película de ficción, por corta que fuese su duración, necesitaba de un guión, un texto donde además de los diálogos que aparecerían en pantalla figurase el desarrollo de la acción. Esto –el guion– ha llegado a ser ya comúnmente aceptado como un género literario. Al principio eran los mismos directores quienes se ocupaban de escribir los guiones originales (de hecho muchos directores actuales continúan haciéndolo: Woody Allen o Almodóvar son buena prueba de ello) o adaptaciones de obras literarias, bien teatro, novela, cuento e incluso zarzuelas y óperas (Tena, 2007, p. 15).<sup>8</sup>

From the above, it is possible to infer that the strong connection with - or even dependence of - cinema on Literature in Spain made it possible to have a historical outcome that was different from that which occurred in Brazil, where foreign industries became the true protagonists of the history of the national cinema, from the 1912.

7. World War I disorganized the European industrial structure, as it produced a void that was occupied by American films. Thus, in 1925, these films occupied 70% of the French, 95% of the English, and 68% of the Italian markets [...] In 1921, of the total of 1295 censored films in Rio de Janeiro, 923 were of American origin, Brazil being in fourth place among the countries that imported films printed in the US. In 1925, this trend intensified” (Simis, 1996, p. 74).

8. Since its creation, cinema and literature have been intimately linked. Any fiction film, no matter how short the duration, needed a script, a text in which besides dialogues, figured the development of the action. This - the script - has already become commonly accepted as a genre. In the beginning, it was the same directors who were busy writing original scripts (in fact, many current directors continue to do so: Woody Allen or Almodóvar are proof of this) adaptations of literary works, theater, novel, story and even zarzuelas and operas (TENA, 2007, p. 15).

Following Tena's line of thought, critic Sally Faulkner (2013) comments that the successful men of the film industry in Spain believed in elevating filmmaking via literature as a way to increase the audience. Therefore, the films invested in were those that attract the large middle class based on the prestige of the classics of literature, just as Hollywood did by using authors such as Shakespeare, Dickens and Tennyson. Undoubtedly, this strategy was an important element of distinction in the trajectories of Brazilian and Spanish cinema.

It is also important to point out that important writers have entered the world of cinema and have thus contributed to recognizing film as an intellectual activity. In this context, we can highlight the playwright and Spanish critic Jacinto Benavente y Martínez, winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1922. On this important figure, Tena (2007) comments:

Jacinto Benavente se implica tanto que además de adaptar sus obras y codirigir dos de ellas, escribe guiones originales, funda dos productoras (Madrid Cines y Films Benavente SL) y participa con otros literatos en la creación de C.E.A. En su comedia "¡No quiero, no quiero!" incluye el rodaje de una película com fines benéficos, que sirve de divertimento a las clases aristocráticas... (Tena, 2007, p. 17)<sup>9</sup>.

Just as with Jacinto, other writers became deeply involved in cinematographic activities and saw their works become movies when they were still alive. Unlike Spain, in Brazil there was no expressive involvement of great writers in cinematographic activities, according to Gomes:

A certain approximation of men of prestige such as Irineu Marinho, Olavo Bilac, Coelho Neto or Medeiros Albuquerque, did not last long, since that approximation had been roused by the brief animation that reigned in 1917, the year in which the production reached its highest point. Taken together, the making of films with a plot was precarious and rare (Gomes, 1980, p. 57).<sup>10</sup>

This demonstrates the timid and brief approximation of the Brazilian literati in cinematography which contributed little to the process of adapting works of living writers. The distancing from these 'men of prestige' made it impossible, for example, to adapt their works while they were still alive, a very different picture from that previously shown in Spain, where most of the works adapted were by then living writers, which gave them the possibility of being critics or collaborators, when they did not produce the adaptations of their own works.

9. Jacinto Benavente is so involved (with the cinema) that in addition to adapting his works and co-directing two of them, he writes original scripts, founds two production companies (Madrid Cines and Filmes Benavente SL) and participates, with other writers in the creation of C.E.A. In his comedy "*I do not want to, I do not want to!*" he includes a charity movie that serves as entertainment for the aristocratic classes ... [Our translation]

10. Uma certa aproximação de homens de prestígio como Irineu Marinho, Olavo Bilac, Coelho Neto ou Medeiros Albuquerque, durou pouco, desde que essa aproximação fora suscitada pela breve animação que reinou em 1917, ano em que a produção atingiu o seu ponto mais alto. Tomada em conjunto, a realização de filmes de enredo foi precária e escassa (GOMES, 1980: 57).

## Final remarks

The history of cinema in Brazil and Spain presents important points of convergence and divergences that allow us to analyze them from historical, political and literary contexts that intervene, in one way or another, how the new artistic and cultural activities were received. Such activities sometimes emerge as alternatives to those pre-established or traditionally pointed out or legitimized by social standards within a historical chain of accepted norms and techniques that legislates them.

Although the first records of cinematographic activities of the countries in question arose during the same period, important aspects changed the trajectory of this art in its national contexts. The considerable number of works produced in the first decade in which cinema emerged in these countries shows a marketing filed that was fertile and open to new experiences in the artistic-cultural context. In the eyes of the foreign producers, Brazil was seen as a country with promising potential for the entertainment industry, while in Spain, where the entertainment market was more closed, the propagators of nationalist ideologies were eager to fix their cultural values by using all possible vehicles, including those for leisure and entertainment.

From the 1910s onwards, there was a decline in the production of both countries. However, a much more consolidated literary system in Spain was decisive for a significantly larger number of cinematographic productions produced from literary work, while in Brazil, the literary system, the structure of which was barely visible, did not present significant contributions to cinematography. Since there was no engagement between the literary and the literary production class, few literary works were adapted for the cinema, thus contributing to a severe dwindling of national productions from the outbreak of the First World War, which culminated in the total domination of the Hollywood industry throughout Brazil.

It can be seen that the relationship between literature and cinema in the first decades of the twentieth century in Spain was very salutary to national ideas, considering that this approach had a direct impact on the historical outcome of other artistic and cultural manifestations and contributed to the national agenda. In Brazil, this approximation would only occur in a more striking way decades later because cinema was initially not seen as an activity that could fit into a national artistic representation, since its first manifestations arose from initiatives of foreign immigrants.

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